

TREASURY DEPARTMENT  
UNITED STATES PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE  
RUPERT BLUE, SURGEON GENERAL

CORRECTIONAL METHODS  
AND REFORMATION OF JUVENILE  
DELINQUENTS

BY

W. L. TREADWAY  
*Passed Assistant Surgeon  
United States Public Health Service*

---

REPRINT No. 556  
FROM THE  
PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTS  
SEPTEMBER 12, 1919  
(Pages 2062-2070)



WASHINGTON  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
1919

100-10  
100-10  
100-10

ADDITIONAL COPIES  
OF THIS PUBLICATION MAY BE PROCURED FROM  
THE SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
AT  
5 CENTS PER COPY

## CORRECTIONAL METHODS AND REFORMATION OF JUVENILE DELINQUENTS.<sup>1</sup>

By W. L. TREADWAY, Passed Assistant Surgeon, United States Public Health Service.

Mental hygiene stands in very definite relationship to the causes, care, and prevention of mental diseases. It is important not only because of the serious death toll resulting from such disorders, but also because of the economic inefficiency resulting from the inability of a number of individuals suffering from even mild types to adjust themselves properly to difficult situations in life. Furthermore, such individuals are in frequent conflict with the customs and conventions of society. Reports of crimes and misdemeanors committed by them convey a very definite meaning to those who are familiar with the abnormalities of conduct of persons suffering from mental diseases. The frequency of such conflicts is a reliable index of the magnitude of one phase of the mental hygiene problem.

Recent studies, conducted by the Public Health Service, of the mental condition of the inmates of private and State schools for the reformation of juvenile offenders, have demonstrated that numbers of these inmates are under average in mental development or suffer from some form of psychic disturbance (1)<sup>2</sup>. Mental disorders arising during early life tend to bring children suffering from them within the purview of the criminal code and in large part are responsible for the failure of such children to respond to efforts at reformation.

Of 633 children of this type examined (493 boys and 140 girls) 470, or 74 per cent of the boys and 76 per cent of the girls, were mentally normal. Of the abnormal boys observed, 15.4 per cent were mentally retarded, 7.5 per cent were feeble-minded, 1 per cent were doubtful as to eventual mental development, and 2.4 per cent were psychopathic. Of the latter group, one-half manifested perverted sexual instincts in the form of homosexuality. Of the abnormal girls observed, 10 per cent were mentally retarded, 9.3 per cent were feeble-minded, 0.7 per cent were doubtful as to eventual mental development, and 3.5 per cent were psychopathic. To make quite plain the problem involved in the reformation of offenders of this type, it is necessary to review briefly the history of the methods adopted for the reformation of juvenile delinquents in the United States.

<sup>1</sup> Reprint from the Public Health Reports, vol. 34, No. 37, Sept. 12, 1919, pp. 2062-2070.

<sup>2</sup> Number indicates reference cited. See page 10.

Brief History of the Correctional Methods for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents in the United States.

Prior to 1825 all juvenile offenders of both sexes were housed and cared for in prisons and jails along with adult criminals. This method of care did not result in the reformation of juvenile offenders, but aided those who were adept pupils to become more conversant with the methods of older criminals; it served as a school of vice and crime for the juvenile delinquent.

The New York Society for the Prevention of Pauperism wisely considered the feasibility of providing a separate institution for the reformation of juvenile offenders. This society later became (2)<sup>1</sup> "The New York Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents," and through its efforts the first separate institution in the United States for the reformation of the juvenile delinquent was opened in New York City on January 21, 1825. The institution was known as the "New York House of Refuge" (3),<sup>1</sup> and it cared for offenders of both sexes. In 1826 the New York Legislature authorized this institution to receive children from any city or county in the State and provided that the commissioners of health should pay to the institution any surplus from the funds not required for the maintenance of the Marine Hospital (4).<sup>1</sup> In the same year the House of Reformation for Juvenile Offenders was established in Boston. In 1828 a similar institution was opened in Philadelphia, and in 1847 (5)<sup>1</sup> the Boys' House of Refuge was established by the city of New Orleans.

The State of Massachusetts established the first reform school for boys in 1847. It is now known as the Lyman School for Boys.

The establishment of the above-mentioned institution for the reformation of the juvenile delinquent had for its aim the removal of juvenile offenders from the influence and teachings of the adult criminal.

The next step in the reformation of juvenile offenders was the separation of the sexes (6),<sup>1</sup> and the inauguration of separate institutions for boys and girls. This need was first recognized and the first step made in its direction at the Boston House of Reformation, where a committee recommended separation of the sexes.

The next advance in the reformation of juvenile offenders was the inauguration of a State visiting agency, whose duty consisted of visiting and reporting on families before children were indentured to them. The first State visiting agency was established in Massachusetts in 1869 (7).<sup>1</sup>

Prior to the adoption of the provision for the separation of juvenile and adult offenders it was recognized that criminals in general were often illiterate and without definite occupation. Since the inauguration of the first institution for the reformation of children who were

<sup>1</sup>Number indicates reference cited. See page 10.

criminally inclined an attempt has been made to give them some form of education. The logical sequence of this endeavor was the establishment of certain industrial requirements in connection with these institutions. At first, children were "farmed out" at an hourly rate, or a rate fixed on the basis of piecework. Later, and the practice still continues in some institutions, the industries were provided for financial gain only, the products being either used in the institution or offered for sale on the market. Somewhat later the industries were modified so as to furnish instruction which would be useful to the child in occupations in later life. It was found that the industries that were most useful in producing revenues were less apt to be useful to the child in after life. The plan in the better regulated institutions of to-day is to provide a training in some industry which will make the child self-supporting in the future (7).<sup>1</sup>

The first institutions for the reformation of juvenile delinquents were called "Houses of Refuge," and later, "Reform Schools." The latter term usually stigmatized the child and often interfered with his advancement later in the outside world. Therefore the names of these schools were changed, sometimes by legislative enactment, to "Industrial Training Schools," which signified the general trend of correctional methods. The term "Industrial School" soon became synonymous with "Reform School," thereby defeating the intention of removing the stigma. Although many institutions continue to be known as Industrial Schools, others are substituting the names of persons or places to designate them.

The first institutions were built on the congregate plan, and many continue to be so constructed. Following the idea that the institution should approach as nearly as possible a home-like arrangement, the cottage plan of construction was later adopted. This plan afforded a homelike or family arrangement which undoubtedly influences reformation and materially adds to comfort and discipline. The first institution of this character was established at Lancaster, Ohio. This example has been followed in many States, and has taken precedence over the earlier plan of construction.

One of the most striking and important steps in the treatment of the juvenile delinquent was the rapid extension of the probation system. This system involved a suspension of sentence, the child being permitted to return to his own home, there to remain under the oversight of a probation officer, and subject to proceedings in case of future misconduct.

Probation was one of the features in the State visiting agency established in Massachusetts in 1869, but had probably been in operation to a limited extent prior to that date. A number of cities have provided for probation of juvenile offenders in the appointment of probation officers. The better institutions for their reformation

<sup>1</sup>Number indicates reference cited. See page 10.

provide for the probation of juvenile delinquents prior to their ultimate discharge.

A more recent method of dealing with juvenile offenders has been the establishment of separate courts to deal with children's cases. This prevents the actual association of children with adult offenders. Illinois established the first court devoted to children's cases. It was established in Chicago under the provision of the juvenile court law of 1899. Similar measures were inaugurated in Pennsylvania in 1901, in Milwaukee in 1901, and in New York City in 1902. These examples have been widely followed.

It is interesting to note that the separation of juvenile offenders from adult criminals, begun by the establishment of separate institutions in 1825, was not applied to court procedure until 75 years later (8).<sup>4</sup>

#### The Need for Psychological Clinics.

The latest development in dealing with juvenile delinquents is the creation of a psychological clinic in connection with juvenile courts. The mental examination of juvenile delinquents has not been adopted by all juvenile courts, nor has the method of procedure in these clinics been uniform.

It is surprising that so many children pass through the juvenile courts each year and receive sentences affecting in some instances their entire after life without cognizance being taken of whether or not their maladaptation was due to some form of mental disorder. The success of reformation of the juvenile offender is dependent in a large measure upon whether or not his antisocial tendencies are directly due to some form of a diseased mind.

These studies have revealed the fact that 11 per cent of the children observed in institutions for the reformation of juvenile delinquents had some form of mental disorder which interfered with normal adaptation. Heretofore correctional methods adopted in these institutions have been applied to groups of children only, and no account has been taken of, nor provision made for, certain abnormal types of personality whose maladjustment will always render them unable to cope with more or less complex environments and situations without individual supervision.

#### Abnormal Personalities Observed Among Juvenile Delinquents.

Owing to the fact that certain children of abnormal personality were observed during the course of these studies, it is deemed advisable to append a brief description of such personalities as a guide to admission to these institutions and to the necessary corrective measures to be employed.

The feeble-minded boy is unable to compete on equal terms with his normal fellow. Although he may be able to earn his own living,

<sup>4</sup>Number indicates reference cited. See page 10.

through lack of training and evil companionship he is liable to acquire habits of conduct which bring him into conflict with the criminal code. These habits are not easily overcome, because his low intelligence limits his understanding of the rights of others, and by the same token he can not comprehend the debt he owes to society. The feeble-minded boy at the time of admission to a correctional institution has usually already acquired vicious practices which have brought him into conflict with the law. It seems reasonable to suppose, therefore, that correctional methods as applied to groups of children in institutions for their reformation may not have the same effect upon him as upon children of normal intelligence. The feeble-minded should be cared for in institutions especially provided and equipped for their training and guidance.

There is another class of individuals who, because of certain maladaptations, can not compete on equal terms with their fellows. The personality of this type is so warped by an inflated ego that it does not admit the existence of the rights of others. Such persons possess highly sensitized feelings and, if they are not allowed to exercise their will, become violent, sullen, unreasonable, and quarrelsome. They perceive slights where none are intended and go through life with their ego so much in the foreground that constant inner conflicts develop when slight difficulties are to be overcome. They often suddenly become furious and commit acts of violence that lead to serious consequences. Usually attempts at correction are met with violent resistance. Because of their egocentricity they are unable to see the value of any criticism or to conduct themselves with credit in difficult situations. Such persons are not looked upon as possessing a well regulated or organized mentality. Persons with this type of inferior mental or emotional equipment require individual care and training in self-control.<sup>1</sup>

A considerable proportion of individuals of this egocentric personality have had convulsive seizures at one time or another. In some cases convulsions occur in early childhood and continue throughout life. In others there is a remission of the convulsions with a recurrence during adolescence. In some the convulsions occur only during late childhood or adolescence. On the other hand, there are those of this type of personality who have never had such seizures. The

<sup>1</sup> These cases have been recognized for many years. For example, J. Crichton Browne as early as 1890 called attention to this type of individual. The following is taken from his article "Psychical Diseases of Early Life," *Mental Science*, Vol. VI, 1899-90:

"The intellectual faculties of the person affected remain entire and unimpaired. He is perfectly capable of perceiving and knowing and judging. He cherishes no delusions. He can not in the ordinary and legal acceptance of the term be pronounced insane; and yet he is to all intents and purposes of unsound mind as much requiring guidance, restraint, and treatment as the furious maniac. He suffers from entire perversion of moral principle, from the want of every good and honest sentiment, he is actuated by impulse or by the most selfish, depraved, and cruel motives."

The same author, further commenting on these cases, says: "There is not lacking those who will remorselessly commit them to the scaffold or penitentiary, little thinking that in so doing they punish disease and not crime."

fact that convulsions do occur in them has led some authorities to consider the egocentric personality and the epileptic temperament identical. Studies conducted by the Public Health Service suggest that the egocentric personality may be associated with, or even allied to, the epileptic temperament. The maladjustment of these individuals appears to be due to a constitutional defect or perhaps to difficulties which the individual has been unable to cope with in early life.

There is still another class admitted to correctional institutions who do not profit by the usual training methods as applied to groups of normal children, and who require individual methods of training. Such persons show a considerable degree of activity which manifests itself by motor restlessness and rapid flow of speech, a constant and ever-changing motor activity. Their energy appears to be directed to the accomplishment of some definite task that is never completed because of the tendency to go from one scheme to another. In conversation their speech is usually rapid, loud, and sometimes boisterous, with frequent change of topic and loss of the trend of thought in an endeavor to elucidate some circumstance associated with the main issue. In addition, they exhibit certain characteristics of emotional adjustment. They are happy, jovial, and easy to become acquainted with. This pleasant emotional reaction is more or less constant, but at times it may be replaced by an irritability that is fleeting and transitory in character. The characteristics of this type of personality when not unduly pronounced may be quite useful, but when marked they materially interfere with efficiency. This is known as the so-called "manic-depressive" type of personality.

Methods of correction of this group should be individual in character and directed toward the guidance of superfluous energies into productive channels. Owing to the fact that environmental influences aid in bringing about a proper direction of their efforts they are more amenable to ordinary correctional methods than the other type of personality previously discussed. It must be borne in mind, in the application of correctional measures, that persons of manic-depressive personality readily develop antisocial tendencies. In fact, these usually are in evidence at the time of their admittance to a correctional institution.

It is now quite generally recognized that boys frequently show homosexual traits of character until the period of adolescence is approached. At that time heterosexuality begins to play a part in their choice of reaction. When this biological change of character does not occur at the approach of adolescence the earlier traits of homosexual tendencies remain fixed. Older children whose incorrigibility is shown by grave homosexual acts will generally not be benefited by correctional methods in institutions for their reforma-



tion. The problem of recovery and correction of these tendencies appears to be wholly a psychological one.

There are other individuals admitted to correctional institutions whose personality or make-up is definitely psychopathic in character. These cases should be recognized and individual care, training, and guidance afforded them. Because of their defects they can not be expected to conduct themselves with credit when made to pursue the training ordinarily adopted for the correction of juvenile delinquents in mass or groups.

#### Summary.

These studies have shown a high percentage of retarded and backward children among those admitted to correctional institutions. Such cases require individual instruction to overcome faulty methods of training. They should also live under the best of hygienic surroundings and should be provided with modern school equipment which will aid them in doing their school work at a maximum efficiency. Especial care should be exercised in the heating, ventilation, and lighting of their school rooms.

The presence of physical defects among the pupils of correctional schools adds no doubt to the problem of retardation among them. Attempts to have these remediable defects corrected will no doubt aid in liberating latent mental energies, and help to bring these retarded children within the limits of normal intelligence.

There is little doubt that environmental and living conditions influence to some extent the manner of emotional adjustments of individuals. Thus, wholesome and hygienic surroundings in these institutions, coupled with formal education, supervision of play, and adequate play facilities, will enable these children better to understand the rights of others and the debt they owe society. But of more importance is the fact that they will be better able to enjoy the amenities of life, and will find other interests and ideals which will aid in submerging their criminal propensities.

The presence of so many feeble-minded boys interferes with the plan adopted for the correction of the normal boys in these institutions. The feeble-minded can not be expected to control their acts, nor to conduct themselves in the same manner as their more fortunate normal fellows. They should be cared for in institutions provided especially for them.

The fact that 11 per cent of the inmates of the institutions have some form of mental disorder warrants the conclusion that the problem presented by this group should be recognized and special provision made for it, or that this class should be excluded from admission to these institutions. The adoption of such a program would contribute to make correctional institutions what they purport to be, namely, schools for character building. In other words, mental

disorders must be taken into account in attempting the reformation of juvenile delinquents.

Since the presence of mentally abnormal children among juvenile delinquents suggests that special provisions should be made for this group in correctional institutions and probationary systems, the important corollary follows, that a psychopathologist should occupy a place on the staff of correctional institutions and that one of similar training should serve as an arm of the juvenile courts. These measures would lead to a better understanding of the psychopathic child, enable a better grouping of delinquents, serve in the administration of disciplinary measures, and aid both in preventing the miscarriage of justice and in the proper disposition of certain cases. Furthermore, the better understanding of psychopathic children would perhaps serve to prevent or to modify antisocial reactions in adolescents.

#### References.

- (1) A Study of the Mental and Physical Status of the Citizens of the National Junior Republic, Annapolis Junction, Md. By Taliaferro Clark, Assistant Surgeon General (R), and W. L. Treadway, Passed Assistant Surgeon, United States Public Health Service. (Unpublished.)  
A Study of the Mental Condition of the Inmates of Four Colorado Institutions for Minors. By W. L. Treadway, Passed Assistant Surgeon, United States Public Health Service. (Unpublished.)
- (2) Laws of New York, 1824. Chap. CXXVI.
- (3) Laws of New York, 1826. Chap. XXIV. Sec. 1.
- (4) *Ibid.* Sec. 11.
- (5) The Care of Destitute, Neglected, and Delinquent Children. By Homer Folks. The MacMillen Co. 1902.
- (6) Girls Reformatories, Reasons for Establishing. By W. P. Letchworth. Mathews, Northrup & Co. Buffalo. 1887.
- (7) Juvenile Offenders in the United States. By T. J. Charlton. In "Reformatory System in the United States." Government Printing Office. 1900.
- (8) The history of the development of correctional methods will be found in the Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1875, 1880, 1885, 1888, 1890, 1894, 1896, 1897.





